

MEMORIAL

JOHN THRUSTON FARRAR, MD
1920–2012



John Thruston Farrar, MD, died on his 92nd birthday on June 26, 2012, in Williamsburg, Virginia.

John was born in St Louis, Missouri, where he spent his early youth. After completing high school, John left his home in St Louis to attend Princeton University, from which he received his bachelor's degree. After graduating from Princeton, John returned to St Louis and enrolled in Washington University School of Medicine. John received his medical degree from Washington University in 1945. Subsequently, John served in the United States Army Medical Corps.

After his military service, John went to Boston where he served his residencies in Internal Medicine at Boston University Medical Center and in Clinical Pathology at Boston City Hospital. At Boston University John commenced his life-long career in gastroenterology under the tutelage of Franz Ingelfinger, MD, who was at that time one of the nation's most pre-eminent scholars and teachers in gastroenterology. After completing his fellowship in gastroenterology with Franz Ingelfinger at Boston University, John was offered and accepted a faculty position in the Division of Gastroenterology at Boston University. Subsequently, John moved to New York City where he continued his career in a faculty position in the Division of Gastroenterology of the Department of Medicine of Cornell Medical College.

After his many scholarly contributions as a valued faculty member at Boston University and at Cornell, John moved to Richmond, Virginia, where he was appointed Director of the Division of Gastroenterology in the Department of Medicine of the Medical College of Virginia (now the Virginia Commonwealth University Medical Center). While at the Medical College of Virginia, John built a strong Division of Gastroenterology recognized for its excellence in teaching, research, and patient care.

After his successful leadership of the Division of Gastroenterology at the Medical College of Virginia, John was appointed to the position of Chief of Staff of the McGuire Veterans Affairs Medical Center, which was also in Richmond and considered the principal Veterans Administration affiliate for the Medical College of Virginia. John served in that position for 11 years. Because of his accomplishments as Chief of Staff at the McGuire Veterans Affairs Medical Center, John was chosen to serve as deputy to the undersecretary in the United States Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, DC. During that assignment in Washington he was asked to serve as the acting Undersecretary for Health and did so for more than 1 year.

John had a very successful and extraordinarily varied academic career. He set high standards for himself and enjoyed it. He was widely published and highly respected as a clinical investigator. John made an enormous impact from his ideas, his teaching, and from his research. He was a philosopher as well as a physician and gastroenterologist. His many publications reflected his wide range of interests and personal commitments. They ranged from research studies of the varied motor activities of different portions of the gastrointestinal tract to reflective, philosophical analyses of ethics in medicine. John wrote of the need for medicine to have a code of ethics. He was a devoted student of historical events in medicine and gastroenterology and he

was dedicated to the translation of the effects of those events on current day knowledge and practice, and the possible impact of those events in the future. These thoughts and conceptions fascinated him. Early in his career John was featured on the cover of the April 1957 issue of Life magazine for his participation in the development of a small radio-sensing device which when swallowed transmitted signals of intestinal motor activity to be recorded by an oscilloscope.

In 1983 John served as President of the American Gastroenterological Association, America's oldest and most distinguished gastroenterology organization. He was extraordinarily effective as its president. He took a leadership role in cooperative ventures with the pharmaceutical industry to assist in funding of gastroenterology research. His efforts served to initiate the current, highly productive multimillion dollar program of the AGA/Industry Research Scholar Awards which are given yearly to young professional investigators conducting research in the field of gastroenterology. Throughout his career, John received many awards and recognition. The most prestigious award that he received was the Julius Friedenwald medal from the American Gastroenterological Association in 1995. This medal is awarded in recognition of lifelong contributions to gastroenterology. John also served as Editor of the *American Journal of Digestive Diseases* for 9 years, playing an important role in the advancement of the scope and the quality of the journal.

John possessed high ethical standards and was a scientist at heart who contributed significantly to the field of gastroenterology. Yet he approached life in a jovial way and radiated good humor. John spent his later years in his home in Williamsburg. He also enjoyed his interactions with members and colleagues of the Climatological Association. He immensely valued the acquisition of knowledge whether related to history, politics, or medicine. Learning and teaching accorded him great joy and satisfaction.

John was preceded in death by his daughter, Leslie Tweedy Farrar; a granddaughter, Holland Sedwick Smith; and his two siblings. John is survived by his wife, Rowena Bryan Farrar; his son, John Hayward Farrar of Clinton, Mississippi; two daughters, Elizabeth Gregg Smith of Baltimore, Maryland, and Anne Dandridge Hayes of New York City; a stepdaughter, Andrea Thompson Kruuk of Charleston, South Carolina; the children's spouses; and eight grandchildren.

James E. McGuigan, MD